

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP

INTELLIGENCE REPORT  
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SUBJECT Kulturbund zur Demokratischen  
Erneuerung Deutschlands

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ORIGIN

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SUPPLEMENT

1. The Kulturbund zur Demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands is the most important and most powerful Soviet-sponsored cultural organization in Berlin and the Russian Zone. No organization in Berlin or in the Russian Zone could properly be considered a competitor or opponent of the Kulturbund. It was founded on 4 July 1945 in the Funkhaus in Berlin and maintains offices in Schlüterstrasse (British sector), but its halls, restaurant, and meeting place are located at Jägerstrasse 2 (Soviet sector).
2. The avowed purpose of the Kulturbund is the revival of democracy in German cultural and political life. Its officers and publications have repeatedly stated that the Kulturbund does not favor any political party. Methods used to evade this self-imposed nonpartisanship vary. Paul Wandel, for example, a Communist member of the Kulturbund, is reported by Sopade to have accounted for his partisan statements by saying that he speaks not for his office or the Kulturbund, but rather for his party, the SED. Comment: Wandel, a member of the Central Secretariat of the SED, and president of the Central Administration for Education in the Russian Zone, is also said by Sopade to have declared, in connection with the recent Russian arrests of University of Berlin students, that it is the duty and privilege of SED students to prevent the university from becoming a refuge of reaction. He reportedly receives almost daily directives from the Kulturbund on shaping the political mood of the Russian Zone Germans.)
3. The present officers of the Kulturbund are for the most part the original officers, chosen soon after the Kulturbund was founded. The president, German born, Moscow trained, repatriate Johannes R. Becher, was known as a Communist writer and poet before 1933. Comment: Becher, a member of the Central Secretariat of the SED, is reported to have been a member of the Steering Committee of the Free Germany Committee in Russia. He is credited by some with having converted Field Marshall von Paulus to collaboration with the Russians. General secretaries of the Kulturbund are Heinz Willmann and Alexander Abusch. Comment: Willmann, a Communist organizer of considerable experience, returned from Moscow in the summer of 1945. According to Sopade, he was detailed by Moscow to organize the Kulturbund, and is its present true leader. He is a member of the SED, and is in charge of ideological planning. Willmann was, and may still be, a member of the Soviet Army. (Other Kulturbund leaders who have been members of the Soviet Army are Willi Bredel - Communist writer, formerly a member of the Steering Committee of the Free Germany Committee in Russia, and Klein-Schmidt, a former priest who is a ranking SED functionary in Province Mecklenburg.)

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Abusch returned to Germany from Mexico about eight months ago. A KPD member of long standing, and one of the most important Communists in Germany, he is said to be covertly the editor-in-chief of three large Berlin journals: The Volksbühne; the Aufbau (official publication of the Kulturbund), edited by Klaus Gysi; and the Sonntag, edited by Dr. Günther Brandt. (Brandt is a member of the Central Headquarters of the SED).

4. Thirty Kulturbund members form the Präsidialrat, or Membership Committee, of the organization. Of these, the majority are SED members, though some belong to the CDU; none are members of the SPD. Within this committee there exists a smaller group called the Präsidialausschuss, or Subcommittee. Becher is a member of this group; and its prominent CDU member is Bürgermeister Friedensburg. Most of the other members belong to the SED or sympathize with it. The real control, however, rests in a four-man working party (Arbeitsausschuss). Members of the Working Committee are: Johannes R. Becher, Heinz Hillemann, Alexander Abusch, and Klaus Gysi. The agenda of the membership committee and sub-committee is worked out by the small working party. This inner sanctum constitutes a tightly knit group of people who can operate without interference from the CDU or other non-SED members. 25X1A6a ~~Comment~~: Three Präsidialrat members besides Becher were members of the Free Germany Committee in Russia during the war: Friedrich Wolf, Willi Bredel, and Theodor Plivier, author of Stalingrad. Plivier is also said to be a member of the Central Committee of the newly formed, Communist front, Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes.)
5. The Berlin organization of the Kulturbund is paralleled in all Länder of the Russian Zone, with a Landesleitung of the Kulturbund as the top Land organization. The Kulturbund put up candidates for the Land and Kreis elections in the Russian Zone last fall, but the number of seats gained by them was negligible.
6. The newspaper Abend, as quoted in Sopade, 12 May 1947, estimates membership in the Kulturbund around the first of this year to have been 30,000 to 35,000 in the Russian Zone, 12,000 in Berlin, and a scattered membership in the western zones, which brings the total membership to about 50,000. Undoubtedly the chief recruiting appeal of the Kulturbund is not intellectual but physical. It has made every effort to make the clubrooms it maintains luxurious, and in them mid-day meals are served to members for a very nominal fee without surrender of ration coupons.
7. According to Sopade, the Kulturbund receives monthly dues from its members, who in some instances make voluntary contributions of more than the amount of the dues. It is difficult, however, even allowing for occasional larger contributions, to see how the amount of dues collected is a sufficient sum to cover the cost of administration alone. Sopade cites as an example the fact that the last information received indicated that the provincial presidents of the Kulturbund in the Russian Zone receive 1,200 to 1,500 RM per month, and their assistants between 1,000 and 1,200 RM. The heads of the various sections of the Kulturbund (some ten in all, including writing, art, music, and scholarship) receive about 300 RM per month. Sopade claims to have received information that in Pocklenburg-Pommern the provincial Kulturbund receives money in the hundreds of thousands of Reichsmarks through the Finance Department of the provincial government. 25X1A6a ~~Comment~~: If any proof were needed that the Kulturbund is an instrument of the SED, and by the same token a Communist front organization, such concealed governmental subsidizing would be prima facie evidence.
8. An instance of outright propaganda briefing of a Kulturbund official by a representative of SIA has been reported. According to this well placed and reliable source, a man named Sell was, as representative of the Kulturbund for Sonenberg/Thuringia, called in by a Lt. Col. Vostrikov of the local Kommandatura. Vostrikov asked Sell to arrange for meetings of the anti-fascist parties, to be held during

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April in Sonneberg and in twelve of the larger communities of the district. The lectures were to be in support of the domestic and foreign policies of the Soviet Union.

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9. The Kulturbund collaborates very closely with the Free German Trade Unions Association (FDGB). An example of their cooperation is the organizational work done in April and May of this year in setting up a "Peoples" Theater Organization (Vollsbühnen). The initial meeting was held in Dresden on 29 April 1947, and was dominated by representatives of the Kulturbund and the FDGB. The meeting was keynoted by K. Kneschke, Provincial Secretary of the Kulturbund in Land Saxony, whose theme primarily was that the Soviet occupation authorities had generously supported the movement for a Peoples' Theater, thereby giving the lie to Hitlerian propaganda about Slavic lack of culture. His speech was followed with one by Herr Pfannschmidt, Secretary for Cultural Activities in the Provincial Committee of the FDGB, who pointed out the importance of cultural activities in the political and private life of workers. The Provincial Committee for the German Peoples' Theater Association for Saxony consisted of fifteen members, of whom five were representatives of the FDGB and the following five were representatives of the Kulturbund:
  - Frau Margarete Wirth, Plauen
  - Herr K. Kneschke, Dresden
  - Frau Kate Heidenberger, Dresden
  - Herr Hans Stuhmann, Zwickau
  - Herr Siegmund Ahrentz, Dresden
10. The collaboration between the Kulturbund and FDGB representatives was continued at a convention held in the Kulturbund's Berlin clubhouse on the 16, 17, and 18 of May 1947 for the purpose of founding a Peoples' Theater Association for Germany (Bundes Deutscher Vollsbühnen). At this meeting the S.A. was represented by Major Dr. Dynshtitz of the cultural department of the S.A., and by 1st Lt. Fedor Andra, S.A. Theater Officer.
 

The meeting was distinguished by the presence of Wilhelm Pieck, as well as Prietzel of the FDGB; Hilde Körber, actress and poetess. Karl-Heinz Martin, director of the Habbeltheater; Dr. Friedrich Wolf, playwright; Director Schulze; Fritz Arpenock, publisher; Director Alfred Lindenmann of DLFA; Klaus Gysi; and Walter Maschke of the FDGB.
11. The Kulturbund is best known through its publications, which appear under the imprint of the Aufbau Verlag, founded in August 1945. General manager of the Aufbau Verlag was Kurt Wilhelm, who, however, was never issued a publisher's license by the S.A. In the fall of 1945 the Kulturbund became the licensee of the Aufbau concern. All the shares of the Aufbau Verlag are owned by the Kulturbund, which receives a monthly sum from the publishing house as profits accrued during the month. Aufbau Verlag is responsible for the monthly magazine Aufbau; Aufbau books; Sonntag, a semi-escapist cultural weekly; and Aussprache, the Kulturbund's house organ, distributed to Kulturbund members only. Aufbau's magazine, which made a noticeable attempt during first year of its existence to become a nonpartisan publication, has a present circulation of 80,000 copies. Its former circulation was 125,000. Five thousand copies of Aufbau are regularly sent to the British Zone, the rest going to Berlin and the Russian Zone. No sizable number of copies, apparently, is distributed in the American Zone.
12. All allocations of bulk paper to Aufbau Verlag used to be made by the S.A. This function has recently reverted to the Kulturbundrat, or Cultural Advisory Council, an annex of the Central Administration for Education in the Russian Zone. Though non-partisan publishers and printers are members of this Cultural Advisory Council, the controlling influence lies with Weinert and Mandel, both German born repatriates from Moscow. Mandel is mentioned in paragraph 2, above, as president of the Central Administration for Education in the Russian Zone. Weinert, during the war, conducted the Soviet Army propaganda addressed to the German Army. Because paper allocations were in the

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hands of the SMA, and editorial planning is in the hands of the four man committee of the Kulturbund, the role of the former general manager of the Aufbau Verlag, Kurt Wilhelm, was a limited one. Wilhelm, himself once a member of the SED, possessor of a good anti-Nazi record, with some twenty years experience in publishing, attempted from the start to abide by the non-partisan pretensions of the Kulturbund. At a recent meeting of Abusch, Becher, and Willmann, Wilhelm was eased out of the Aufbau Verlag.

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(Comment: See report [redacted] for Kulturbund propaganda.)

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